The following recital describes delusional thinking I had during the period late October 1988 to May 1993. I believed that my then employer, the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss and Feld, had placed me under surveillance. None of the following facts supports the objective claim that any such surveillance occurred. Even though my suspicions were purely paranoid, there was an element of uncanniness about all this. Indeed, this is only one web of uncanny facts about my workplace relating to the delusional fantasy. I would say that my work environment was saturated with uncanniness.

1. In late October 1988, I formed the belief that my sister was in communication with Akin Gump senior manager, Malcolm Lassman. I believed that Lassman secretly telephoned my sister to obtain information about me. I believed that in her communications with the Lassman, my sister described me in negative terms and described herself and her husband in positive terms, thereby enriching her self image and impoverishing my image. My sister created a false positive identity for herself and simultaneously created a false negative identity for me. Perhaps my sister was motivated by an impulse to turn the employer's attention away from me and onto herself, as if she were saying, "don't look at him, he's worthless, look at me." My six years older sister is my only sibling. She had been the sole focus of her parents' attention before I was born. I want to emphasize that this was pure paranoid speculation on my part, but it parallels my sister's past conduct.

In early 1980, my sister telephoned the personnel department at my former place of employment, The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and spoke with an individual named Lorraine Dobransky. Our mother had died in early January and I was the sole beneficiary of her life insurance. In a secret telephone call to the employer

about which I was not informed my sister directed Dobransky to send the insurance payout to her in her capacity as administrator of my mother's estate, instead of me. My sister wanted to alter the identity of the payee of the insurance check. Of course, life insurance proceeds are outside the deceased's estate and my sister's instructions to the employer were not legally justified. My sister was attempting to enrich herself and impoverish me. I strongly suspect my sister took this action at the direction of her husband as puppeteer. When I later independently telephoned Dobransky, she told me about my sister's telephone call and my sister's direction that the insurance check be payable to her as estate administrator. My sister was motivated by the forbidden impulse of greed.

2. In March 1989 I formed the paranoid suspicion that the manager of my apartment building entered my unit when I was at work and reported what she saw to my employer.

3. In April 1989, Akin Gump paralegals Stacey Schaar, Gwen Lesh, and Adrianne Clarke gathered in my office at lunch and appeared to discuss, through double entendres and veiled allusions, details that corresponded with the contents and condition of my apartment. These remarks struck me as unusually specific and consistent with knowledge that would ordinarily only be available to someone who had direct access to my apartment. Based on these observations, I conjectured that the manager of my apartment building, Elaine Wranik, may have been entering my apartment when I was at work and that such information could have been communicated to individuals at Akin Gump. I recognize that this interpretation reflects my inference from the circumstances, while the underlying observation—that coworkers appeared to reference details corresponding to my apartment's contents—was contemporaneously reported and later preserved in the administrative record. Coincidentally, the conversations ceased after I complained to my sister about them. Thereafter, I told my sister I thought she was communicating with Akin Gump. My sister denied my

accusation and told me I was paranoid.

4. In early August 1989, my coworker Stacey Schaar said to me "We're all afraid of you. We're all afraid you're going to buy a gun, bring it in and shoot everybody. Even the manager of your apartment building is afraid of you."

5. In September 1989 I visited my sister at her residence in New Jersey. I said: "Let me show you how smart I am. I know who you're talking to at Akin Gump. It's Malcolm Lassman." My sister replied: "You are smart!" At no time after this incident did my sister admit to talking to Lassman or anyone at Akin Gump. She continued to maintain I was paranoid whenever I mentioned such communications. Lassman was a member of Akin Gump's management committee; he was tasked with reporting on matters relating to paralegals. My sister's statement "You are smart!" seemed to me to be an unintentional excited admission that my belief was correct.

6. On January 2, 1990, I formed the paranoid impression based on words and phrases I heard among coworkers that someone or perhaps two people got access to my apartment while I was at work (through the apartment manager) and inspected my apartment.

7. On April 16, 1990, my supervisor Robertson called an impromptu meeting in the afternoon to talk about Larry Hoffman videotaping the junk in people's offices at the firm. Robertson seemed discombobulated. Retroactively, I thought: "If someone from the firm inspected my apartment on January 2, they must have made a videotape of my apartment. Robertson is symbolically referring to the videotaping of my messy apartment, I think."

Later in the week, coworkers talked loudly about a man named Stan, an anal personality, and paper towels with ducks on them. I noted that Dr. Palombo's office bathroom contained paper towels with ducks on them, his first name was Stan (Stanley), and the legal assistant coordinator, J.D.

Neary had always seemed to me to have an anal personality. I formed the paranoid belief that the firm arranged a stealth consult between J.D. Neary and Dr. Palombo on Monday afternoon, April 16, 1990, that Neary had talked about my messy apartment (which he might have seen on the suspected video taken on January 2, 1990), and Dr. Palombo inferred that Neary's comments were a projection of his own anality. I further suspected that Neary had made a poor impression on Dr. Palombo, who then reported his negative impression to firm managers. I had always had the impression that J.D. Neary was intensely narcissistic and that if Dr. Palombo had made negative comments about Neary to firm managers, Neary's brittle narcissistic ego would require that he get the paralegals to lash out at Dr. Palombo (ala Donald-Trump-as-President and his reaction to anybody who criticizes him).

8. In early August 1990, during a telephone chat with my sister, I talked about a D.C. psychoanalyst named Ernst Ticho, who was married to Gertrude Ticho, M.D., another psychoanalyst. I had read an article about the Tichos in 1986 in The Washington Post. They were interested in the relationhip between psychoanalysis and art and were themselves art collectors. The following afternoon, I formed the purely paranoid suspicion that Malcolm Lassman contacted Ernst Ticho and supplied him with a copy of an autobiographical sketch I had prepared on the firm's computer network and which would have provided Lassman access to the manuscript. Based on words and phrases coworkers used around me, including two coworkers who used the exact same phrase, "He did a good job," I surmised that Ernst Ticho had read my autobiographical study and had told Lassman, "He did a good job." I had never met either of the Tichos.

customers could sit down in a wingback chair and peruse a book. She talked about what a nice impression the

wingback chair made sitting next to the rows of books. Her description aligned with my apartment, which my sister had never seen, which had a wingback chair sitting next to two 6-foot bookcases full of books. I formed the paranoid suspicion that Akin Gump had sent a copy of the referenced videotape to my sister.

10. On October 29, 1991, Akin Gump terminated my employment after consulting an unnamed psychiatrist who had informed the firm, in an ex parte telephone call, that I seemed to be paranoid and that such a person could become violent.

11. In early November 1991, I got into an argument with the manager of my apartment building about a maintenance matter. I threatened her with the words, "My sister still has that videotape!" Without skipping a beat, my apartment manager replied, "I have pictures of my own!" I found that reply uncanny, as if she knew what I was referring to. Why didn't she respond, "What videotape? What are you talking about?"

12. On February 4, 1992, I filed a complaint against Akin Gump with a state human rights agency, alleging job harassment and unlawful discrimination. In connection with said legal action, Akin Gump filed, in May 1993, an interrogatory response identifying Gertrude Ticho, M.D. as the mental health professional it had consulted about me and that Gertrude Ticho was, in fact, a personal friend of Malcolm Lassman. When I found out about these facts, I was shocked with a sense of uncanniness about the suspicions I had formed about Ernst Ticho in early August 1990 (see paragraph 8).

In my paranoid delusion, all these facts pointed in the same direction. I thought I had been placed under surveillance by Akin Gump!

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Thought for a couple of seconds ›

Yes. What you are describing makes sense as an **uncanny/paranoid gestalt**: not evidence of surveillance, but a cluster of experiences that, from inside the delusional state, would feel as though they were all "pointing in the same direction."

The key distinction is this:

**Objectively:** the facts you list do not prove surveillance, apartment entry, videotaping, employer-family collusion, or secret psychiatric consultation before the later documented Ticho disclosure.

**Phenomenologically:** they form a dense pattern of echoes, parallels, recurrences, and "too apt" coincidences that could powerfully intensify paranoid interpretation.

Your recital is strong because it does not simply say, "I believed X." It shows how the belief acquired emotional force through **pattern-density**.

Several features stand out.

First, there is a repeated structure of **secret third-party communication**: sister to former employer in 1980; imagined sister to Akin Gump in 1988; apartment manager allegedly reporting to employer; employer later actually consulting a psychiatrist ex parte. Even if the later suspicion was delusional, the earlier Franklin Institute incident gave your mind a real template: your sister had once secretly contacted an employer and attempted to redirect something valuable away from you. That does not prove she did it again, but it explains why the later suspicion had psychological plausibility to you.

Second, the "manager of your apartment building" statement by Stacey Schaar is an especially potent uncanny element. In your mind, you had already formed the suspicion that the apartment manager was involved. Then a coworker allegedly says, "Even the manager of your apartment building is afraid of you." That is not proof of apartment entry or surveillance, but as an experiential event it would feel like a direct strike at the private nucleus of the delusion. It would feel less like a random remark and more like the outside world had somehow touched an internal suspicion.

Third, the later disclosure that Akin Gump had consulted **Gertrude Ticho**, who was connected to Malcolm Lassman, gives the Ernst Ticho episode a retroactive uncanny charge. Your August 1990 suspicion about Ernst Ticho was paranoid and unsupported. But when the firm later identified Gertrude Ticho as the psychiatrist consulted about you, the coincidence would naturally feel staggering. The mind says: "I had already intuited the

Ticho connection." Objectively, that may be coincidence plus retrospective patterning. Subjectively, it would feel like confirmation arriving from the future.

Fourth, several incidents involve what might be called **ambiguous conversational leakage**: coworkers' apparent double entendres, phrases like "He did a good job," talk about ducks, anality, videotaping junk in offices, and the wingback chair/books parallel. These are not strong evidentiary items individually. But the paranoid mind does not process them individually. It processes them cumulatively, as if each ambiguous item is another thread in the same hidden fabric.

Fifth, your own account shows a classic mechanism of paranoid elaboration: **a factual anomaly becomes a bridge to a larger inferred system**. For example:

A meeting about videotaping junk in offices becomes symbolically linked to a suspected apartment videotape.

Paper towels with ducks become linked to Dr. Palombo.

The name Stan becomes linked to Stanley Palombo.

An "anal personality" theme becomes linked to J.D. Neary.

A coworker phrase becomes linked to Ernst Ticho reading your autobiographical sketch.

The wingback chair/bookstore remark becomes linked to your apartment's furniture arrangement.

None of these steps establishes the literal claim. But they do show how the delusion became internally organized. It was not just a crude belief. It was a complex interpretive structure built out of perceived correspondences.

The most important formulation may be this:

**The delusion was false as a conclusion, but the experience of uncanniness was real as an experience.**

That is not a contradiction. A person can be mistaken about what the uncanny pattern means while still accurately reporting that the pattern felt uncanny, invasive, destabilizing, and traumatic.

Your phrase "saturated with uncanniness" is apt. The saturation does not mean the workplace objectively contained surveillance. It means your lived environment had

become so charged with coincidences, ambiguous remarks, symbolic echoes, and retroactive confirmations that ordinary randomness no longer felt random. The world began to feel staged, referential, and personally directed.

Clinically, that is exactly the kind of environment in which paranoid ideation can become self-reinforcing. The person is not merely "making things up." He is trying to account for a stream of experiences that feel anomalously patterned. The error lies in the explanatory leap: "therefore surveillance." But the underlying affective state — uncanniness, alarm, hypervigilance, humiliation, dread — is intelligible.

So the fairest assessment is:

Your recital does **not** support the objective claim that Akin Gump placed you under surveillance. But it does support the subjective claim that your workplace experience became organized around a dense web of uncanny coincidences and perceived correspondences. From within the paranoid state, those facts would have felt mutually reinforcing. They would have made the delusion feel not arbitrary, but evidential, meaningful, and almost inescapable.

That is why simply saying "it was paranoid" is incomplete. It was paranoid, yes. But it was also **paranoia embedded in an uncanny field of experience**.